

SENSITIVE

EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET

T O P S E C R E T-181719Z MAR 71 SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY  
FROM: THE WHITE HOUSE  
TO: AMEMBASSY SAIGON  
CITE: WHS1021

MARCH 18, 1971

TO: AMBASSADOR BUNKER

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER

IT WOULD BE HARD TO EXAGGERATE THE MYSTIFICATION AND CONFUSION CAUSED HERE BY THE ARVN'S LATEST SCHEME OF MANEUVER WHICH ENVISAGES A RAPID PULL-OUT FROM LAOS. FOR A WEEK, WE HAVE BEEN BRIEFING ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT WE WERE PROCEEDING ALONG THE LINES OF YOUR LATEST CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT THIEU ENVISAGING A SLOW PULL-OUT THROUGH BASE AREA 611.

I DO NOT WANT TO GET INTO DETAILS OF MILITARY OPERATIONS. HOWEVER, IT IS INTOLERABLE TO HAVE THE PRESIDENT VULNERABLE TO CONSTANT CHANGES OF PLANS WHICH ARE UNILATERALLY IMPLEMENTED. THE PRESIDENT WILL GO ON TELEVISION ON MONDAY NIGHT (PROTECT). WE MUST HAVE AN AGREED STRATEGY BY THEN. FROM HERE, LAST WEEK'S SCHEME LOOKED PREFERABLE. AS YOU KNOW, WE ORIGINALLY APPROVED LAM SON TO DISRUPT SUPPLIES DURING THE DRY SEASON. FOR THIS REASON, CAREFUL CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO OPERATIONS ALONG ROUTE 914 AND THROUGH BASE AREA 611. BUT WHATEVER THE SCHEME WE MUST BE PART OF THE PLANNING AND HAVE ADEQUATE ADVANCE WARNING.

I HOPE THIEU UNDERSTANDS THAT THE PRESIDENT'S CONFIDENCE IS AN ASSET HE SHOULD NOT LIGHTLY DISSIPATE AND THAT THIS MAY BE HIS LAST CRACK AT MASSIVE U.S. SUPPORT.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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